Guide to the James F. Ahern Papers

MS 2086

compiled by Robert Bartels

February 2019

Yale University Library
P.O. Box 208240
New Haven, CT 06520-8240
mssa.assist@yale.edu
http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/
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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Manuscripts and Archives
Yale University Library
P.O. Box 208240
New Haven, CT 06520-8240
mssa.assist@yale.edu
http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/

CALL NUMBER: MS 2086

TITLE: James F. Ahern papers

DATES: 1954–2017

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 11.34 linear feet (42 boxes)

LANGUAGE: The materials are in English

SUMMARY: The collection consists of the personal papers of James F. Ahern, documenting his position as chief of police for New Haven, Connecticut.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: http://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.2086

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Manuscripts and Archives reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at http://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.2086.

To order reproductions from this collection, please go to http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/ifr_copy_order.html. The information you will need to submit an order includes: the collection call number, collection title, series or accession number, box number, and folder number or name.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition


Conditions Governing Access

The papers are open for research.

Original audiovisual materials, as well as preservation and duplicating masters, may not be played. Researchers must consult use copies, or if none exist must pay for a use copy, which is retained by the repository. Researchers wishing to obtain an additional copy of non-commercially produced items...
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**Preferred Citation**

James F. Ahern Papers (MS 2086). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

**Biographical / Historical**

James F. Ahern was born in New Haven, Connecticut, in 1932. Ahern first joined the New Haven Police Department as a patrolman in 1954, and in 1968 was appointed police chief. Ahern presided as police chief in 1970 during the May Day student protests at Yale University and the New Haven Black Panthers trial. Ahern was credited for his efforts to diffuse the tense situation surrounding the protests and ensure they did not become violent. After leaving the New Haven Police Department in 1970, Ahern became a critic of violent police tactics, authoring a book, *Police in Trouble: Our Frightening Crisis in Law Enforcement*. In 1970 Ahern served on the President’s Commission on Campus Unrest (also known as the Scranton Commission), which investigated violent clashes between college students and police at Kent State University and Jackson State University. He also served as director of the Insurance Crime Prevention Institute in Westport, Connecticut until his retirement in 1982. Ahern died in 1986.

**Scope and Contents**

The collection consists of the personal papers of James F. Ahern, documenting his position as chief of police for New Haven, Connecticut. Included are materials related to student and police activities during May Day 1970 at Yale University, wiretapping by the New Haven police, and Ahern’s role as a member of the President’s Commission on Campus Unrest in 1970. Also included are photographs of Ahern, posters, magazine articles authored by and concerning Ahern, audio and visual recordings of Ahern’s media appearances, scrapbooks with speeches and news clippings, correspondence by Ahern and family, and Rolodex cards with names and contact information for Ahern’s colleagues in police administration.

**Arrangement**

The collection is arranged into seven groupings: New Haven Police Department, President’s Commission on Campus Unrest, Speeches and writings, Scrapbooks and printed media, Correspondence, Photographs, and Audiovisual material.
## Collection Contents

### New Haven Police Department

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 1</td>
<td>May Day reports</td>
<td>1970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 2</td>
<td>Wiretapping case</td>
<td>1981–1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 3-5</td>
<td>Rolodex cards</td>
<td>circa 1970s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 2, f. 1-4</td>
<td>Rolodex cards</td>
<td>circa 1970s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 3, f. 1-2</td>
<td>Rolodex cards</td>
<td>circa 1970s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 3, f. 3</td>
<td>Address cards</td>
<td>circa 1970s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 3, f. 4</td>
<td>Business cards</td>
<td>circa 1970s</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Post-retirement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. 13, f. 1</td>
<td>Certificate appointing James F. Ahern honorary lieutenant colonel in Rhode Island State Police</td>
<td>1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 3, f. 5</td>
<td>Certificates</td>
<td>1978–1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 3, f. 6</td>
<td>A survey of the political climate in New Haven, Connecticut</td>
<td>1971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 3, f. 7</td>
<td>Transcript of telephone conversation between James F. Ahern and Fred Cronan</td>
<td>1971</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### President’s Commission on Campus Unrest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. 14</td>
<td>Certificate appointing James Ahern to the President’s Commission on Campus Unrest, signed by United States Secretary of State William Rogers and President Richard Nixon</td>
<td>1970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 4, f. 1-3</td>
<td>Commission final report draft</td>
<td>1970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 4, f. 4</td>
<td>The Report of the President’s Commission on Campus Unrest, bound copy</td>
<td>1970</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Speeches and writings

Includes speeches and written material by James F. Ahern documenting his views on policing and police reform.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. 4, f. 5</td>
<td>Book material for <em>Police in Trouble</em></td>
<td>circa 1972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 5, f. 1-2</td>
<td>Book outline for <em>Police in Trouble</em></td>
<td>circa 1972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 5, f. 3</td>
<td>Book review, <em>Cops and Rebels: A Study of Provocation</em></td>
<td>1972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 5, f. 4</td>
<td>“Democratic Control and Professional Restraint”, reprinted from <em>The Great Ideas Today</em></td>
<td>1972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 5, f. 5</td>
<td>Interview for director of the FBI</td>
<td>circa 1970s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 5, f. 6</td>
<td>Magazine articles</td>
<td>1971–1974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 5, f. 7</td>
<td><em>Meet the Press</em> interview transcript</td>
<td>1970</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Speeches

- **b. 5, f. 8**
  - Speeches
  - 1969–1971

- **b. 5, f. 9-10**
  - Speeches
  - Includes a speech by Ahern about the 1970 Kent State shootings.
  - 1971

### Scrapbooks and printed media

- **Scrapbooks contain newspaper clippings, articles, and photographs related to James Ahern and the New Haven Police Department, documenting Ahern’s work as a police officer and police reform activist.**

- **b. 6, f. 1-12**
  - Ahern, James F., scrapbook
  - 1968–1970

- **b. 7, f. 1-10**
  - Ahern, James F., scrapbook
  - 1970–1971

- **b. 8, f. 1**
  - The Grapevine Press
  - 1958–1959

- **b. 8, f. 2-11**
  - Insurance Crime Prevention Institute (ICPI) scrapbook
  - 1971

- **b. 9, f. 1**
  - Magazine articles about James Ahern
  - 1959–1982

- **b. 9, f. 2-3**
  - Magazines about police and crime prevention

- **b. 12, f. 1**
  - Nadjari, Maurice, articles and press release
  - 1975–1976

- **b. 9, f. 4-7**
  - News clippings about James Ahern and policing
  - 1972

- **b. 10, f. 1-3**
  - News clippings about James Ahern and policing
  - 1972–1974

- **b. 10, f. 4**
  - Newspaper articles on James Ahern and policing
  - circa 1960s–1980s

- **b. 10, f. 5**
  - Scrapbook with photographs
  - 1971–1983

- **b. 10, f. 6**
  - Unbound articles and newspaper clippings
  - 1967–1972

### Correspondence

- **b. 10, f. 7**
  - Ahern, Jennifer, and Steve Curtin, concerning James Ahern research project
  - 2015–2017

- **b. 11, f. 1**
  - Barry, Raymond J.
  - 1985

- **b. 11, f. 2**
  - Brunner, Thomas W.
  - 1985

- **b. 11, f. 3**
  - City of New Haven Board of Aldermen
  - 1986

- **b. 11, f. 4**
  - Conway, William S.
  - 1973

- **b. 11, f. 5**
  - Hait, William N.
  - 1986

- **b. 11, f. 6**
  - Harness, Wendall C.
  - 1983

- **b. 11, f. 7**
  - Hartnett, Donald E.
  - 1986

- **b. 11, f. 8**
  - Herot, Frederick C.
  - 1983

- **b. 11, f. 9**
  - James, Jennifer
  - 1975

- **b. 11, f. 10**
  - Lee, Richard
  - 1985–1987
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. 11, f. 11</td>
<td>McLaughlin, Marilou</td>
<td>1987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 11, f. 12</td>
<td>O’Connor, Thom</td>
<td>1986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 11, f. 13</td>
<td>Thier, Samuel O.</td>
<td>1986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 11, f. 14</td>
<td>Unidentified correspondent</td>
<td>1983</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Photographs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. 12, f. 2</td>
<td>&quot;33 Rookie Cops Train Hard to Combat Crime in the Elm City&quot;</td>
<td>circa 1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 11, f. 15</td>
<td>Ahern, James F.</td>
<td>circa 1960s–1970s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 13, f. 2-4</td>
<td>Ahern, James F.</td>
<td>circa 1970s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Includes a portrait and a signed group photograph of President’s Commission on Campus Unrest.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Audiovisual material

Original audiovisual materials, as well as preservation and duplicating masters, may not be played. Researchers must consult use copies, or if none exist must pay for a use copy, which is retained by the repository. Researchers wishing to obtain an additional copy of non-commercially produced items for their personal use should consult the ordering reproductions information on the Manuscripts and Archives web site.

Cassette tape titles were recorded by processing staff directly from media label information, when present.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. 15</td>
<td>Tape 1, Johnny Carson 1 Videocassette (VHS)</td>
<td>circa 1970s–1980s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 16</td>
<td>Tape 2, Face the State (CT) 1 Videocassette (VHS)</td>
<td>circa 1970s–1980s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 17</td>
<td>Tape 3, ICPI, Johnny Carson, Lee Leonard, Q&amp;A 1 Videocassette (VHS)</td>
<td>circa 1970s–1980s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 18</td>
<td>Tape 4, Practice speech, Bill Boggs Midday Live 1 Videocassette (VHS)</td>
<td>circa 1970s–1980s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 19</td>
<td>Tape 5, ICPI, Bill Boggs Midday Live 1 Videocassette (VHS)</td>
<td>circa 1970s–1980s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 20</td>
<td>Chapter 1, tape 1, and chapter 6, tape 6 1 Audiocassette</td>
<td>circa 1970s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 21</td>
<td>Chapter 1, tape 2 final, and chapter 1, tape 3 final 1 Audiocassette</td>
<td>circa 1970s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 22</td>
<td>Tape 2 1 Audiocassette</td>
<td>circa 1970s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 23</td>
<td>Tape 6, first tape 1 Audiocassette</td>
<td>circa 1970s</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| b. 24 | Tape 6, second tape  
1 Audiocassette | circa 1970s |
| b. 25 | Carefree, Arizona speech, December 10, 11, and 12  
1 Audiocassette | circa 1970s |
| b. 26 | Instructions  
1 Audiocassette | circa 1970s |
| b. 27 | Junior ? speech  
1 Audiocassette | circa 1970s |
| b. 28 | Public Affairs Broadcast Group copy of program number 218  
1 Audiocassette | circa 1970s |
| b. 29 | Statement of Richard ?  
1 Audiocassette | 1974 |
| b. 30 | Unidentified tape  
1 Audiocassette | circa 1970s |
| b. 31 | Unidentified tape  
1 Audiocassette | circa 1970s |
| b. 32 | Unidentified tape  
1 Audiocassette | circa 1970s |
| b. 33 | Unidentified tape  
1 Audiocassette | circa 1970s |
| b. 34 | Westport  
1 Audiocassette | 1974 |
| b. 35 | WNHC news  
1 Audiocassette | 1971 |
| b. 36 | WNHC news  
1 Audiocassette | 1971 |
| b. 37 | Conversation between James F. Ahern and Frank Kelly  
1 microcassette | 1971 |
| b. 38 | District Attorney tape  
1 microcassette | circa 1970s |
| b. 39 | Telephone conversation 6/16 (A.M.) between Fred Cronan and James Ahern  
re insurance coverage, City of New Haven, side 2  
1 microcassette | circa 1970s |
| b. 40 | Telephone conversation 6/16 (A.M.) between Fred Cronan and James Ahern  
re insurance coverage, City of New Haven, side 2  
1 microcassette | circa 1970s |
| b. 41 | Wagner tape  
1 microcassette | circa 1970s |
| b. 42 | Wagner tape  
1 microcassette | circa 1970s |
Selected Search Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library’s online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects
Campus police
Police patrol -- Surveillance operations
Student protesters